

WHAT KIDS NEED TO KNOW

Emphasize food as it relates to life today.

- ◆ You will lose kids' attention faster than they can say "osteoporosis" if too much emphasis is placed on how proper nutrition prevents disease. If you succeed in reaching them with the good nutrition message today, their tomorrows will likely be healthier too.
- ◆ Remind children that healthful food promotes achievement. In school or on the playing field, kids who eat well perform better and achieve higher levels of mastery. A nutritious diet fuels the body for learning, growth, sports and play.
- ◆ A fun way to introduce this concept is to use the "Food gives me energy..." sheet on page 8. This activity helps children make the connection between healthy eating and how it gives them the energy needed to participate in the activities that they most enjoy.

The message of good nutrition is summed up in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

- ◆ Adults and kids over the age of two are advised to balance their diets by eating from a wide selection of foods, emphasizing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, seafood and fat-free or low-fat dairy foods; and to choose sensibly by moderating the amount of trans and saturated fat, added sugars and sodium they eat.
- ◆ Two important practical tools for meeting these guidelines are the *MyPlate* food guide and the *Nutrition Facts* food label.

Teach children to refuel their bodies!

- ◆ Because of their smaller stomach capacity and tremendous energy needs, kids require regular meals and snacks. Behavior problems at times are merely the result of an empty stomach.
- ◆ Breakfast is the meal most directly connected to school achievement. Kids who skip breakfast have shorter attention spans, do poorly in tasks requiring concentration and even score lower on standard achievement tests.
- ◆ Somehow, "snacking" has taken on a negative connotation in our society, perhaps because it is often linked with low-nutrient foods. Done right, snacks can and do make a big contribution to daily nutrition. Healthful snacks should mirror meals – emphasizing healthful foods, but in smaller quantities.

Young bodies need to move!

- ◆ Kids should be getting at least one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. Physical fitness should also be part of recess and the daily classroom routine, especially in schools that limit PE to once or twice weekly.

Media literacy should be a part of every child's education.

- ◆ If children are to resist the allure of the media, advertisements and other societal influences, they must learn to critically analyze and evaluate the source and intent of media messages.

Source: *How to Teach Nutrition to Kids*, 4th ed. pages 26–29